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Knowledge for All.

January 5, 2022

Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont
c/o The Vermont Department of Libraries
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Dear Working Group for the Status of Libraries in Vermont,

My name is Mary Danko and I am the Library Director for the Fletcher Free Library located in Burlington, Vermont. The Fletcher Free Library was founded in 1873 and moved into a beautiful Carnegie building built in 1904. In 1981, a new addition increased the size of the library to over 46,000 square feet and included a beautiful 3-story glass curtain wall. The library had over 240,000 visits and over 380,000 circulations in 2018. The library has a budget that is over \$2.3M, has 27 employees and is open 7 days a week.

I am excited to be able to provide input on the topic of *collections* in public libraries.

COLLECTIONS

A public library's collection is one of the key services it provides to its community. Hundreds of years ago library collections only included printed material, but in the last two centuries it has expanded well beyond that to include a myriad of formats, still all with the express purpose of providing the loaning of materials at no charge that inform, delight, and support lifelong learning at no cost and with easy access for everyone.

At the core of all of our collections, and the responsibilities of these collections to our communities, are the tenets found in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement, both developed by the American Library Association. All public libraries embrace and follow these statements that clarify and uphold the intellectual freedoms that are a core to our democracy. These documents are provided at the end of this testimony. It is important to understand that librarians fight censorship of any kind against our collections. Our collections have been curated in accordance with policies developed with our Library Trustee Boards and

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through the thoughtful work of professional librarians. Currently, libraries are facing unprecedented attacks against our collections because of political agendas. Library collections are not political and any attempt at censorship is serious. The American Library Association has recently put out a statement in this regard and it can be found at the end of this testimony as well.

For the purposes of this testimony, I will provide some basic overview information on public library collections, and then I will present information by dividing the topic into the two major collections public libraries provide: physical collections and virtual collections, also known as eResources.

Libraries are community treasure chests, loaded with a wealth of information available to everyone equally, and the key to that treasure chest is the library card. I have found the most valuable thing in my wallet is my library card. — Laura Bush

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Purchasing and Curating

The job of purchasing items and formats for the library collection is a continually daunting task. With limited budgets, librarians must curate collections they believe provide the best options for their communities. Communities in Vermont vary. Some communities serve large populations of Immigrants and Refugees and some communities serve large portions of Seniors. Communities are constantly changing in their demographics and librarians respond to those changes by what they thoughtfully add to their collections.

Libraries need consistent and reliable funding for their collections. This funding works best when it is tied to some growth factor to the communities they serve. A growing community needs to have a growing library collection that supports it. Funding library collections should not be capricious and state standards would greatly help.

Librarians need training and continuing education to ensure they are developing the best collections for their communities. Ensuring that money is budgeted in yearly operation budgets for this training, as well as supporting the Vermont Department of Libraries (VT LIB) to provide

this training is imperative. VT LIB has been the provider of a variety of librarian training but we need to expand this training and make it easier for all librarians to take part.

There are wonderful opportunities for supporting and facilitating sharing for both physical and virtual collections that will be explored later in this testimony letter.

Access

A library's collection is only as good as the access to it. Access to collections requires a quality, automated, computer system that catalogs the collection and provides patron account features, as well as many other collection management features. In the library industry these computer systems are called an ILS, or an Integrated Library System. A quality ILS needs to be available online, be intuitive for the user, and have a robust backend to support the collection structure.

Currently there are a variety of automated systems utilized by libraries throughout the state. And some libraries are not automated at all. There is a huge opportunity to go to a statewide ILS that would not only improve access for all Vermonters, but would better facilitate sharing among libraries, including Inter Library Loan, which is discussed later. This kind of improvement needs backing and support from the State of Vermont as statewide leadership is integral for such a project's success. Additionally, adequate funding must be regularly set aside to ensure the sustainability of such a system.

Another point that must be made about access to physical collections is to have adequate open hours so community members can pick up items. Having evening and weekend hours are extremely important, especially for families and folks that work long or odd hours. Again, adequate funding for libraries is necessary to provide the needed open hours.

PHYSICAL COLLECTIONS

For public libraries, what is kept in our brick and mortar buildings is a varied and exciting physical collection for all ages. As everyone knows, our core service is loaning books. These books are fiction and non-fiction. They are resources for education, research, and entertainment for everyone in our community. Each demographic that we serve is carefully considered when we purchase books. The youngest children have board books available to them to provide the earliest literacy exposure to spark a lifetime of love of reading, while our

senior populations have carefully selected Large Print books that allow them to read more easily.

It is important to highlight the importance of the book collection for youth. The sheer abundance and ease of access to youth books and materials from birth through high school has major impacts on the learning. It is only the wealthy families that can afford to buy the picture books, the early readers, the fiction books that are all part of the journey of learning that children go through. It is estimated that a child that has picture books read to them in their early years of development builds a word database of over 60,000 words, compared to a word database of only 10,000 words for those children who are not read to. Providing the vast selection of books in a library collection increases the chances of young children having a solid base of literacy that will lead to their academic success. Since libraries are free to all, there is an equity for any child to benefit from a library's youth collection.

As a child progresses to reading on their own, the need for a quantity of early readers and early chapter books are instrumental in building their confidence to becoming solid readers. Moreover, it should go without saying that the books provided for our youngest community members are chosen to not only be factual and correct, but are also selected to promote diversity and inclusion in a myriad of ways. Children go through voracious periods of reading and absorb content like sponges. Youth librarians take this seriously and are always updating the youth collections to be relevant, meaningful, and exciting.

In addition to books for reading, public libraries provide Audiobooks on CDs and Playaways, which are self-contained audiobook devices. Many people prefer to take in information and books auditorily. This is for a variety of reasons, including accessibility for some individuals living with disabilities. The library also provides DVDs and Music CDs in our collections. Some people think these formats are antiquated, but it is important to understand that not everyone can use downloadable or streaming services. Many folks do not want to have a digital account for a variety of reasons. It is important to be especially aware of this for migrant communities who have justifiable concerns about their anonymity.

Miscellaneous or Library of Things

One of the more recent developments for libraries to have in their collections are "things" that may be borrowed that can help a community member learn a new skill and help save money.

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By borrowing something that they only need to use once in a while, like a food dehydrator or a special gardening tool, libraries are serving as a cost-saving community resource while encouraging green living.

One of the most important additions to the “Library of Things” collection during the pandemic has been the addition of laptops and hotspots which has helped to bridge the digital divide for many Vermonters. Increased support for these types of laptop and hotspot collections is very much needed.

Interlibrary Loan

As you may already know, Interlibrary Loan is the mechanism by which libraries can borrow books and materials from each other. These items are processed by librarians and then sent via a van delivery system throughout Vermont. The sharing economy of libraries is one of its most unique features and enables any community member to get an item from anywhere via Interlibrary Loan. Technology has greatly increased the ease of access with improved systems, however, there is much more potential that can be expanded. Other states have state-wide systems that allow patrons to initiate Interlibrary Loans and the items are seamlessly delivered to the patron’s home library for pick-up.

Vermont is a fairly small state and the opportunities for collection sharing using a statewide system and the van delivery system is an exciting opportunity. There are ways of geographically dividing the state, developing standards, establishing a statewide library card, and effectively using the van system that would be economically advantageous and would provide optimal provision of materials to Vermonters. I sincerely believe this project is doable. It would take work, dedication, and funding, but would have clear, positive, impacts on getting quality items to our community members.

With a statewide automated system, increased collection sharing would occur, and could be broadened even to the level of collection development. There are ways to share the costs of collecting and maintaining back collections, with libraries becoming subject experts. Again, statewide leadership and funding is necessary to make this kind of project happen and be successful.

Local History Collections

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As someone who has worked in several Vermont libraries, I know that almost every library has a very unique local history collection. These are treasures that tell the town's or city's history and are deserving of special mention. The care of these collections is very specific and improving their access by digitization should be a priority for our state. There are many programs that can help public libraries digitize their collections, however, often funding is an issue. Funding also means the provision of staff to help get these projects going and then funding for ongoing staff to ensure these collections are properly maintained. Digitization not only preserves and protects these valuable collections, it also greatly improves access. Our Vermont history is a large part of our identity and is often an economic driver for those studying it or personal genealogy stories that are connected to it. The Fletcher Free Library has a lovely Local History Collection, but it is in desperate need of tender care and digitization. We see folks who come in every week and use the collection for a variety of purposes, often after traveling very far. We want to continue to improve and care for our collection to continue to provide this valuable access in a thoughtful and standardized, industry accepted process. Major funding is our current obstacle to making this happen.

Foreign Language and ESL (English as a Second Language) Collections

Burlington has a large population of Immigrants and Refugees. We work very hard to have a Foreign Language collection that provides reading materials for these populations, but also instructional materials so that our community members can learn the languages that these folks speak. We also have built and continue to build a collection that supports learning English as a Second Language. Materials in this collection include: instructional books, dictionaries, grammar books, easy reading books, grammar books, teacher aid books, and more. This collection offers Citizenship materials as well. These include such materials as test prep books and practice flash cards.

These collections are one of the most difficult to maintain. Our community is constantly changing, note our newest Afghan refugees are arriving right now and we are working to update our collection accordingly. Also, these items are heavily used and need regular replacing. Finally, we would like to expand this collection and include more books that work on other skills, such as math or job skills. Funding is our biggest challenge in meeting the needs of this collection. Statewide support would have great impacts and would signal from all our public libraries that the state of Vermont takes the inclusion of our Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant populations seriously and with concern for their well-being.

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VIRTUAL COLLECTIONS

Public libraries also provide eBooks & eAudiobooks through a variety of web and app services. One such service is Overdrive which is provided by our consortium non-profit, 501(c)3: the Green Mountain Library Consortium (GMLC). Overdrive provides the majority of our eBooks and eAudiobooks. GMLC was started over 10 years ago to meet the demands of Vermonters to provide these virtual collections, like Overdrive. GMLC has worked with the member libraries to provide this essential service, as well as many other library services. When libraries work together in this consortial manner to provide services like these, the economies of scale are abundant. Our consortium needs funding and support so we can continue to grow.

There are many possibilities to make these collaborations bigger and better, to not only include Overdrive, but other vendors of virtual collections. Again, leadership and funding at the state level could provide guidance, management, and strategic planning that would help to equitably distribute these resources to all Vermont libraries.

There are also streaming services for television shows and films, as well as digital magazine collections. The Fletcher Free Library individually works with the vendors Hoopla and Kanopy to provide expanded eResources, but we would gladly welcome the opportunity to work with the state to be a part of a bigger buying group that would leverage our combined power and provide of management economies. We would be very interested in exploring new opportunities for digital magazine collections and graphic novel collections, too.

Another part of the digital collection that is very important to the library resources we provide are eResources. These include informational databases that include both popular periodicals and peer reviewed journals. Having access to this quality information is crucial for our patrons and for the reference help we give our patrons. Additionally, these research resources help entrepreneurs and businesses obtain information to create business plans and expand their markets. This digital collection resource is currently provided for by the Vermont Department of Libraries, but there are many opportunities to expand it and provide access to even more quality information.

At the Fletcher Free Library, we also provide access to the New York Times, Consumer Reports and Value Line. Again, paying for these services as an individual library is very costly. By

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negotiating as part of a larger, state group there is huge potential for lowering costs and providing more resources with better access to ALL Vermonters.

Interactive eResources

Finally, it is important to remember that part of our collections include interactive eResources, like free online classes. These can be computer classes, Test Prep classes, language classes (both foreign languages and English as Second Language), and all kinds of various educational classes. These classes help to continue life-long learning and specific skill building to assist with employment and economic development. These are provided through a variety of vendors, some through a VT LIB contract, and some through individual contracts. Once again, negotiating large contracts on a state level would be a great improvement for libraries and Vermonters.

There are other online services that would be wonderful to offer our communities. For example, libraries in other states offer online tutoring services for students and more classes through Lynda.com.

Public libraries are continually assessing their collections to best serve their communities. Throughout the history of public libraries, we have continually expanded what we provide and how we improve access. This will continue into the future as libraries are a necessity in providing services equitable to everyone in our community. However, we need support with ample, consistent funding and with strong leadership to make sure this equitable social infrastructure continues. We know that an informed democracy is a strong democracy. By providing free and easy access to our carefully curated collections to anyone who walks through our doors, we are a large part of ensuring that America is and will continue to be a strong democracy.

Thank you for taking the time to take in this testimony. I hope you can better understand the richness and impacts that public library collections bring to a community for folks of all demographics and of all circumstances. I would be delighted to engage with anyone who would like further information or has questions.

Thank you again.

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Sincerely,

Mary Danko
Library Director

The health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries. — Carl Sagan

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

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VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights* are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as [Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights](#).

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement>

The Freedom to Read Statement

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings. The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or*

considered dangerous by the majority.

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of

life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer*



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to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

A Joint Statement by:

[American Library Association](#)

[Association of American Publishers](#)

Subsequently endorsed by:

[American Booksellers for Free Expression](#)

[The Association of American University Presses](#)

[The Children's Book Council](#)

[Freedom to Read Foundation](#)

[National Association of College Stores](#)

[National Coalition Against Censorship](#)

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[National Council of Teachers of English](#)

The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/statement-regarding-censorship>

ALA Statement on Book Censorship

The American Library Association opposes widespread efforts to censor books in U.S. schools and libraries

CHICAGO - Due to a dramatic uptick in book challenges and outright removal of books from libraries, ALA's Executive Board and the Boards of Directors for all of ALA's eight divisions have released the following joint statement regarding attempts to remove materials that focus on LGBTQIA+ issues and books by Black authors or that document the Black experience or the experiences of other BIPOC individuals:

In recent months, a few organizations have advanced the proposition that the voices of the marginalized have no place on library shelves. To this end they have launched campaigns demanding the censorship of books and resources that mirror the lives of those who are gay, queer, or transgender, or that tell the stories of persons who are Black, Indigenous or persons of color. Falsely claiming that these works are subversive, immoral, or worse, these groups induce elected and non-elected officials to abandon constitutional principles, ignore the rule of law, and disregard individual rights to promote government censorship of library collections. Some of these groups even resort to intimidation and threats to achieve their ends, targeting the safety and livelihoods of library workers, educators, and board members who have dedicated themselves to public service, to informing our communities, and educating our youth.

ALA strongly condemns these acts of censorship and intimidation.

We are committed to defending the constitutional rights of all individuals, of all ages, to use the resources and services of libraries. We champion and defend the freedom to speak, the freedom to publish, and the freedom to read, as promised by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

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We stand opposed to censorship and any effort to coerce belief, suppress opinion, or punish those whose expression does not conform to what is deemed to be orthodox in history, politics, or belief. The unfettered exchange of ideas is essential to the preservation of a free and democratic society.

Libraries manifest the promises of the First Amendment by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas, so that every person has the opportunity to freely read and consider information and ideas regardless of their content or the viewpoint of the author. This requires the professional expertise of librarians who work in partnership with their communities to curate collections that serve the information needs of all their users.

In 1953, when confronted with comparable threats to our democratic values, the American Library Association issued the Freedom to Read Statement, a declaration in support of freedom to think or believe as one chooses, the freedom to express one's thoughts and beliefs without fear or retaliation, and the right to access information without restriction. ALA's Executive Board, staff, and member leaders reaffirm not only the principles of the Freedom to Read statement but also the daily practices that ensure it continues to inform the profession and that library workers and library trustees have the training, information, tools, and support they need to celebrate and defend their communities' right to read and to learn.

With the freedom to read under threat, the ALA, including its Executive Board, Divisions, Roundtables, and other units stand firmly with our members, the entire library community, allied organizations, and all those across this country who choose to exercise their own right to read and access information freely, and we call on others to do the same.

*American Library Association Executive Board
American Association of School Librarians Board of Directors
Association of College and Research Libraries Board of Directors
Association for Library Service to Children Board of Directors
Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures Board of Directors
Public Library Association Board of Directors
Reference and User Services Association Board of Directors
Young Adult Library Services Association Board of Directors
United for Libraries Board of Directors*

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There's a term you don't hear these days, one you used to hear all the time when the Carnegie branches opened: Palaces for the People. The library really is a palace. It bestows nobility on people who can't otherwise afford a shred of it. People need to have nobility and dignity in their lives. And, you know, they need other people to recognize it in them too.

— Eric Klinenberg, [*Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*](#)

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